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Dean of Chapman School of Law Announces Retirement

ORANGE, Calif., July 11, 2006 Parham H. Williams, dean of the Chapman University School of Law, announced today that he will retire from the position following nearly a decade of leading the school. Williams was named dean and vice-president of the Chapman law school in 1997 (he also teaches, and holds the schools Donald P. Kennedy Chair in Law). In the ensuing nine years, he led the nascent law school through its birth pangs and helped create today's successful institution. Today, the Chapman University School of Law, which serves some 560 students and is the only Orange County school of law located on a four-year university campus, is nationally recognized, accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the prestigious Association of American Law Schools.

While I regret to announce that our friend Parham Williams is retiring, I also cannot help but recall with a profound sense of gratitude the extraordinary chapter of Chapman history that he has helped to write, said James L. Doti, president of Chapman University, in a statement to the university community. In him we found a leader who is strong and committed, dedicated to the very highest standards, devoted to developing a distinguished faculty and passionate about attracting students of the finest caliber. While he commands stature as an educator and dean, he also is a true Southern gentleman whose quiet grace, wisdom and determination have seen us through a remarkable decade of growth.

Williams has agreed to continue as dean for the upcoming academic year while a national search is conducted for his successor, and will serve as an advisor on the search committee. My experience at Chapman has been the high point of my 35 years of law deaning, Williams said, noting that few universities enjoy the quality of leadership and support that Chapman commands.

Williams, who holds his LL.M. degree from Yale Law School and his B.A. and LL.B degrees from the University of Mississippi, served as vice-president and dean of Samford University (Birmingham, Ala.) from 1985-1996 and dean of the University of Mississippi School of Law from 1971 to 1985 before coming to Chapman. He held his own law practice and then served as a district attorney in Mississippi before joining the faculty of the University of Mississippi law school in 1963.

An avid writer and amateur artist, Williams looks forward to an active retirement. I'm one of the more prolific unpublished novelists around, he says with a smile, noting that he plans on writing juvenile fiction and working on his paintings, among other pursuits. Williams wife, Dr. Polly Williams, is a professor in Chapman University's English department. A specialist in Southern literature and writers, she also served as assistant dean of Chapman's Wallace All Faiths Chapel during its formative years.